

Skin Mass/Tumor

How do I know if my pet has a skin mass?

Commonly, masses and growths are discovered while petting or grooming your pet. Regular examinations by your veterinarian will also aid in the early detection of masses. Some masses have a history of slow growth and may go unnoticed for weeks to years. Other masses may appear suddenly or form an ulcer due to self-trauma (licking or scratching) or secondary inflammation. Skin masses can vary in size and appearance.

What causes skin masses?

There are several causes for skin masses, including: infections, tumors, parasites, injury, cysts (clogged or inflamed glands), warts and calluses.

How will I know if a mass is cancerous?

Skin and subcutaneous (under the skin) masses are typically divided into two categories; benign (non-cancerous) and malignant (cancerous). Malignant tumors can be aggressive and life-threatening. Your veterinarian will make a diagnosis of the mass based on symptoms, examination findings and laboratory tests that may include taking a sample of the mass for microscopic analysis.

If treatment is needed, it can vary widely based on the type and size of the mass. If the mass is suspicious (possibly cancerous), immediate removal and microscopic evaluation may be recommended. Your veterinarian may also perform chest x-rays of your pet to see if the cancer has spread to other parts of the body.

Any skin mass that you find on your pet should be evaluated by a veterinarian, especially those that grow, change, or become painful, ulcerated or infected.

Should my Pet's skin mass be removed?

The possibility of the mass reoccurring or spreading to other parts of the body (malignancy) is the most important consideration when deciding if a skin mass should be surgically removed or simply monitored. Another factor is the comfort of your pet. Some masses can be uncomfortable depending on their size and location, and even painful, especially if the mass is ulcerated. Many times mass removal is curative if removed before spreading to other parts of the body. Delaying treatment can make surgical removal more difficult. Your veterinarian should examine all skin and subcutaneous masses. With immediate and proper treatment of skin masses, your pet will have a greater chance of a positive outcome.